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C O N F I D E N T I A L SECTION 01 OF 02 JERUSALEM 001169

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TAGS: [PGOV](#) [ASEC](#) [KWBG](#) [IS](#) [SY](#) [EG](#)
SUBJECT: PREPARATIONS FOR FATAH SIXTH PARTY CONGRESS
UNDERWAY

REF: JERUSALEM 1087

Classified By: Consul General Jake Walles for reasons 1.4 (b,d).

Summary

11. (C) Preparations to hold the Fatah Sixth Party Congress in Bethlehem on August 4th are underway. Fatah officials expect to publish a delegate list on July 15; this date may be pushed back due to internal wrangling over the number of delegates. Concerns remain about the ability of Gaza-based Fatah members to attend. The Congress is expected to elect a new 21-member Fatah Central Committee (FCC) and 120-member Fatah Revolutionary Council (FRC), although the political work of drafting the Congress' program and finalizing FCC electoral mechanisms is just beginning. End Summary.

Venue and Timing

12. (C) The decision to hold the Congress in Bethlehem (Reftel) appears to be holding, although concerns persist about possible delays should delegates outside the West Bank be unable to attend. Approval of Bethlehem as a venue for the Congress was conditioned on the ability of Gaza-based Fatah delegates to travel to the West Bank for the Congress. President Abbas has asked Egypt and Syria to convince Hamas to permit these delegates to depart Gaza. Approximately 300 Fatah members are currently imprisoned by Hamas in Gaza. On July 8, Hamas officials prevented two expected Sixth Party Congress delegates (Musa al-Wazir and Zainab al-Wazir) from departing Gaza through the Erez crossing. Fatah officials remain concerned about the ability of delegates to navigate Israeli travel restrictions, but report the GOI has agreed to facilitate the travel of delegates to Bethlehem.

13. (C) Efforts continue at the grassroots level to increase the number of delegates attending beyond the 1550 cap established by the FRC on June 24, with individual factions within Fatah maneuvering for numerical advantage. Senior Fatah officials told PolSpec July 8 that the delegate list would be officially published on July 15, following its approval by the FCC and the Congress Oversight Committee.

Administration, Agenda and Program

14. (C) The FRC has tasked a 33-member Congress Oversight Committee, chaired by Ahmed Qurei (Abu Ala'a), with planning and administering the Congress. Committee members have begun drafting the Congress' program, but progress has been focused on technical issues such as timelines. (The Congress' agenda is expected to follow roughly the model of the Fifth Party Congress, held in 1989, which consisted of inaugural

activities, speeches, and elections on the final day.)
Serious discussion at more senior levels about the program's political content is just beginning.

Elections and Observers

15. (C) Delegates to the congress are expected to vote in separate rounds to elect a new FCC and FRC. Nominally, in elections for the FCC, delegates will select 18 candidates; the 18 receiving the highest number of votes overall will invite an additional three FRC members to join them in forming the new, 21-member FCC. In elections for the larger FRC, delegates will cast 81 votes for their preferred candidates; the victorious 81 will be joined by the 21 new FCC members and 18 additional individuals chosen by the FCC to form a new 120-member FRC. In practice, these arrangements are subject to further negotiation, particularly as to the balance of FCC members that are elected vice appointed, or "elected by acclamation."

Comment

16. (C) For the first time, most Fatah contacts report that it is more likely the conference will be held than not, and believe it would be a significant step forward for the Fatah movement. "Insiders" from the West Bank and Gaza territories will be included for the first time, and nearly 20% of the delegates will come from district committees elected since Fatah's 2006 election debacle. Nonetheless, a successful Congress will require meaningful change in the movement's

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leadership (particularly on the all-important FCC) and a political program which, at the very least, does not represent a step backwards on issues such as the "right of resistance."
WALLES